

GOD HIDES IN OUR LIVES

And when we understand that God is revealed in Jesus, the faith that has discovered him soon spots him everywhere and falls to its knees at the sudden realization. Beneath the seemingly random movements of history, within the humble church, behind all the faithful vocations that make the world work—in, with, and under it all—we catch the meaning of Isaiah, “Truly you are a God who hides himself” (Isaiah 45:15). If I live in a home that is lovely and warm, with a wife who doesn’t hold my sins against me, with daughters who put their arms around my neck, they are the masks with which God conceals himself. They are wonderful blessings to me.

God is hidden in my own life story, answering my questions and dilemmas with his own kind of silence, driving me to his words. Yet I come to know him in ways otherwise not possible, as he schools me in the hard words, “Not my will, but yours be done.” Beneath my cross, I encounter my God in the words of Scripture. Our relationship is mediated even there, and yet is so intimate, so immediate. He is drawn all the way down and into my life.

“‘You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,’ declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 29:13,14).

GOD HIDES IN NATURE

At last, consider the humbling beauty and staggering intricacy of nature that compel every human being to sit up and marvel. The dazzling sunset breathes into the word *glory*—at least a partial meaning for us in the here and now. We feel ourselves to be in an encounter with God. The truth is, the sunset is not God. He is far more, infinitely more, and all of it unknowable and unknown. No, the sunset is just another of those things God has placed in between. Like every other act or creation of his, it marvelously reveals him, while at the very same time, he himself and his actual glory remain fully veiled.

Nature offers her relentless, astonishing testimony day by day to God’s invisible and indescribable qualities. But nature in all her artistry cannot satisfy the longings she awakens, nor answer the questions she poses. Reason can never peer past the curtain or pass through the phenomena to God himself. Those who try, despising the simplicity of Genesis chapter one and two, forfeit the elemental information found there available in no other way. Reason has lost its mind. Outside of Jesus, God has locked

up his heart and hidden his will. Who wants to know God must listen to Mary’s son. And so our journey to God involves a detour. We must constantly turn *away* from nature, as C.S. Lewis wrote, and “pass from the dawn-lit field into some dusty little church . . . back to our studies, back to our Bibles, back to our knees.”

The faithful and most gifted scientists I have known show little interest in harmonizing faith with that worldly brand of science that is simply too far gone, its denials of revealed truth worked too deeply into the very fabric of its own thinking. No, the faithful believing minds hum with “even the winds and the waves obey him” (Matthew 8:27). They don’t speculate. They adore.

WHEN WE UNDERSTAND THAT GOD IS REVEALED IN JESUS, THE FAITH THAT HAS DISCOVERED HIM SOON SPOTS HIM EVERYWHERE.

Meanwhile, they have a proper lack of enthusiasm for proving God or for bringing anyone to faith if it involves demonstrating the reasonableness of Scripture or piling up scientific documentation to take the edge off our foolishness. A person won in such a way is not yet won. Such faith is no faith at all. The Scriptures supported by science are open to attack at that very spot. A faith buttressed in this way may very well not survive the university. Where God has spoken in Scripture, no matter the subject matter, reason must be dethroned. Every thought must be taken captive to Christ. Since this is our approach to all of life, childlike as it is, we can only take the same approach to nature.

That is, we believe.

We believe that the stuff of life—the impossibly big and the unthinkably small, all that whirls and dances, flashes out and holds together—that it all exists because he wills it . . . for us. Maybe more can be safely said using words like *gravity* and *photosynthesis*, words that describe but can never explain. Certainly not less.

Our hope is in God. We look forward to the day when the hidden Lord Christ steps out from behind the sunset and the glacier, the foxes and the periodic table, everything that made you cry, and history and the Church, the books of Genesis and Isaiah, Romans, John, the water, the bread, the wine—and nothing stands in between.

All will be changed at last. In a twinkling and in a flash. We will be face to face.

Mark Poustian, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. Paul, New Ulm.



A WORLD WI A WORLD

IN AN EFFORT TO EXPLAIN ALL OF NATURE, THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE
ENDED UP REACHING FAR BEYOND BOTH SCRIPTURE AND NATURE.

Darwin's 1859 publication of *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* offered another worldview. Darwin provided a mechanism by which life could be explained without any reference to God.

Science is not separate from its times. Furthermore, the events in an individual scientist's life, as seen in the first part of this magazine series, also affect scientific claims. Science is a human activity subject to everything that is human. There is bias. There are limits. There is human error. What happened with Darwin was that biology took a philosophical turn.

Physics had already taken this turn. Isaac Newton (1642–1727), perhaps Britain's greatest scientist, had described the universe as completely explainable using fixed physical laws. Everything was like a clock wound up and running, so there was no need for God to actively preserve it. This allowed God to be the Creator of the laws, but his active role as preserver in day-to-day operations was deemed unnecessary.

Darwin's uncle, Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802), an agnostic before the term was invented, had espoused evolutionary changes among creatures. He emphasized the characteristics that were acquired through the artificial breeding of animals and the marriages of humans. But his statements did not attract much attention. We do know that his nephew, Charles, took note of his ideas.

French scientist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1829) also suggested that animals could evolve. He thought that an animal could acquire helpful physical changes during its life and then pass them on to its offspring. The classic example was that giraffes would reach for the highest leaves on trees thereby slightly stretching their necks. He believed that this change would be passed on to the next generation.

They in turn would stretch to add even more height to this helpful adaptation. But Lamarck lacked support for his ideas. Darwin and many others, therefore, rejected his mechanism of acquired characteristics but not the idea of evolution.

REASON ADDED TO SCRIPTURE

At the same time, in a well-meaning effort to explain all of nature, theology and science were mixed together. Human reason ended up reaching far beyond both Scripture and nature.

The Bible and nature were viewed as two revelations from God, each for our learning. Unfortunately, theologians often felt that the book of nature was clear by itself without the revelation of God in the Bible. As science produced more discoveries, this "natural theology" attempted to explain even these new discoveries of nature in terms of the moral lessons they believed God had plainly put there. The country parsons and the upper classes of England would often spend much time dwelling on questions concerning nature's meanings.

In the process natural theologians went too far. When dinosaurs were being discovered, William Kirby (1759–1850), an outstanding entomologist, suggested that there might be a cavern under the crust of the earth where dinosaurs still lived so that dinosaurs would not be evidence for an old earth. Furthermore, this cavern would be filled with water, the same hidden water that God used in the biblical flood. The dinosaurs, because they were viewed as lizards by the science of that time, would enjoy the water. In order to keep dinosaurs from preying on Adam and Eve, Kirby invented scientific supports for faith that could only eventually draw ridicule.

Kirby stated in the spirit of the times, "The author of Scripture is also the author of Nature

THOUGHT GOD; WITH GOD

WERE MIXED TOGETHER DURING DARWIN'S TIME AND HUMAN REASON
THEN DARWIN TOOK THEOLOGY OUT OF THE PICTURE. **Paul R. Boehlke**

and this visible world, by types indeed, and by symbols, declares the same truths as the Bible does by words. To make the naturalist a religious man—to turn his attention to the glory of God, that he may declare his works, and in the study of his creatures may see the loving-kindness of the Lord." The natural theologians filled their writings with examples of a good creation but neglected the violence and cruelty also evident in nature. Darwin focused on the other side: that nature was suffering and could be cruel.

THE RESULT

Any consideration of theological meaning in biology was removed by Darwin. In his theory of natural selection, the variety in nature undergoes cold selection by the environment just as the breeder of cattle selects the animals to be bred. Those that are more fit pass their traits on and have more offspring. So a species survives and changes; nature makes us what we are. Of course, Darwin's argument polarized his readers.

Darwin's *The Origin of Species* held that we are the results of a natural process and implied that this life is all that there is. Darwin conceded that God could have started it, but the rest was simply an uncaring mechanism. In modern times Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard added that if evolution could somehow be done over, humans most likely would not even occur. By chance, the process would take different turns.

The applications of evolutionary thought vary. At the extreme, humans have no purpose in life, are merely equal to animals, and are left without any moral and ethical guidelines.* Our aggressiveness, even rape, can be explained as a result of the struggle to retain our genes—to survive (Richard Dawkins). Any behaviors in which we sacrifice for others can be transformed into selfish behaviors benefiting the survival of our genes. For example, if one would give up life or goods

to defend his tribe, he is helping their genes, which are like his, to make it into the next generation. In this framework, all effort is simply self-serving. Furthermore, we have no special place in nature. All species are the equal results of evolution. It's not difficult then to understand why some attempt to free research animals from laboratories.

All this would be fine, and we would have to resign ourselves to it if it was true, but it is not. God revealed a different view.

Combining science with theology can be philosophically dangerous. If theology endorses a particular brand of science, it exposes itself to attack. For example, in the history of science, it made sense to many that organic compounds could only be made within a living being who contained, according to the science of the time, "a vital principle." This idea seemed to fit well with the Christian faith. Then when Friedrich Wohler (1800–1882) synthesized urea (a compound found in the urine and other body fluids of mammals), it was a blow to both vitalism and Christianity.

Jacques Roger in *God & Nature* states, "Here again, it would have been wiser perhaps not to have linked religion with a changeable philosophy and a transient stage of scientific knowledge. But few can resist the intellectual trends of their age, and, in any case, it is much easier to identify the error of the past than to see the misunderstandings of the present."

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This is the second article in a four-part series on creation and evolution.

**A great many theistic evolutionists believe that God used evolution to create us. They would not accept all of the dark aspects in this paragraph.*

Catie Michaelson

The only Christian on campus?

Even if we happen to be the only believer in the classroom, we should not hide on campus because we are of Christ.

Six years ago I started my college career at the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities. As a 19-year-old girl from Wausau, Wis., I had no idea what I was in for as I headed off to the university and to a campus whose population is larger than that of my entire hometown.

One thing I quickly learned as a student is that you can find just about everything on campus—every culture, every religion, every belief, and, of course, every opinion. Something else that I quickly realized is that with such a large number of students, the population of Christians on campus quickly can appear diluted.

When I was a microbiology undergraduate, I'm sure that many times I was the Christian population of one in the classroom. In fact, the microbiology professor with whom I did research throughout my undergraduate career asked

me numerous times how I could be a microbiologist and doing well in my classes yet at the same time be stupid enough to believe in a Creator instead of the big bang theory. While this was not always easy to deal with, it certainly did challenge me to constantly be prepared to give an answer for the faith that I have.

As I transitioned into a graduate nursing program at the same university, little changed. Several of my current classmates have shadowed a nurse practitioner who performs abortions in Minneapolis, a career choice that they are proudly considering. Again, it has not always been easy to be

the one with the opposing and sometimes unpopular viewpoint, but it is also a constant reminder of the work that God has placed all Christian students here to do. As Christians, if we were not there in that classroom, there might only be one viewpoint heard, only one value voiced. Even worse, there may be no one who aligns with the real truth.

But even if we happen to be the only believer in the classroom, we should not hide on campus because we are of Christ. Hebrews 10:39 states, "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved." We are the blessed recipients of the amazing gift of salvation and the consequential peace that accompanies it. In light of what that gift means to us, what an opportunity to be the only Christian in a classroom!

Each Christian on any campus has the amazing opportunity of coming into contact with hundreds—even thousands—of unbelievers every day. How many people have that same opportunity? Every day we walk by new people; each semester we meet new classmates. There is always an abundance of new faces at the student union, libraries, and sporting events. The harvest is ripe, and the opportunities to share with others the glory of God's love are bountiful! We have been commissioned to go into the world to win disciples for Christ.

As a six-year veteran of university study and everything that it has to offer, I pray that as Christians on campus we can continue to grow in the faith and love of Christ and that through friendship and fellowship we can support and encourage one another. But I also pray that we have the strength and excitement to be the Christian in the classroom, dorm room, cafeteria, or study hall. That way, where we exist, Christ exists.

Catie Michaelson, a graduate student at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, is a member at Pilgrim, Minneapolis.

It all started in a garden . . .

FLAX

MALLOW

DILL

HYSSOP

CORIANDER

MINT

ANSWERS

1. HYSSOP 2. MALLOW 3. MINT 4. MINT 5. CORIANDER 6. DILL

Last summer, a neighborhood garden walk took place in northwest Milwaukee. One of the stops was the backyard of Keith Amborn, pastor at St. Paul, Milwaukee. His unique biblical herb garden created a buzz with the guests and was soon highlighted in Milwaukee's *Journal Sentinel*. The article, which explains the biblical ties of plants in his garden, has since been reprinted in newspapers and magazines around the country. (Learn more on page 23.)

"Plants mentioned in the Bible are the living link between us and the people of distant times," says Amborn. "Today we cultivate plants that grew in the gardens of the Promised Land, plants of which Isaiah and Ezekiel spoke, plants that Jesus used in his parables. For us, wheat is still the staff of life as it was for them. The onion and the leek, the dill, the mint, and the rue of our lives were also part of the everyday lives of the Bible people."

Below is information that Amborn shared about the plants in his garden. Can you match the following descriptions to the plants that are pictured?

1. Mentioned in the Old Testament for purification, this herb is used by herbalists to treat bronchial infections. It attracts bees and butterflies to its nectar-rich flowers (Psalm 51:7).
2. The stems of this plant are soaked or "retted" in water to release fibers for making linen cloth. Fine linens were used as hangings and curtains in the tabernacle as well as for burials. The body of Jesus was even wound in linen cloths with spices (John 19:40).
3. This is one of the oldest existing plant names. In biblical times it was valued for its fresh aroma and sweet taste and was often used to flavor meat. This plant was so valuable that Pharisees tithed it (Luke 11:42).
4. Used to reduce inflammation and ease bee stings, the leaves of this plant can also be made into tea and given for colds and bronchitis. In the Bible, Job mentioned this plant when he spoke of a time when his persecutors and tormentors had no standing (Job 30:1-4).
5. One of the oldest spices, this plant was mentioned in Exodus as one of the bitter Passover herbs. In the desert, it was likened to manna (Exodus 16:31).
6. This plant is an excellent remedy for digestive disorders and was used in the Middle East since biblical times by ancient Egyptian and Roman doctors. It was also one of the tithed herbs (Matthew 23:23).

Picture this

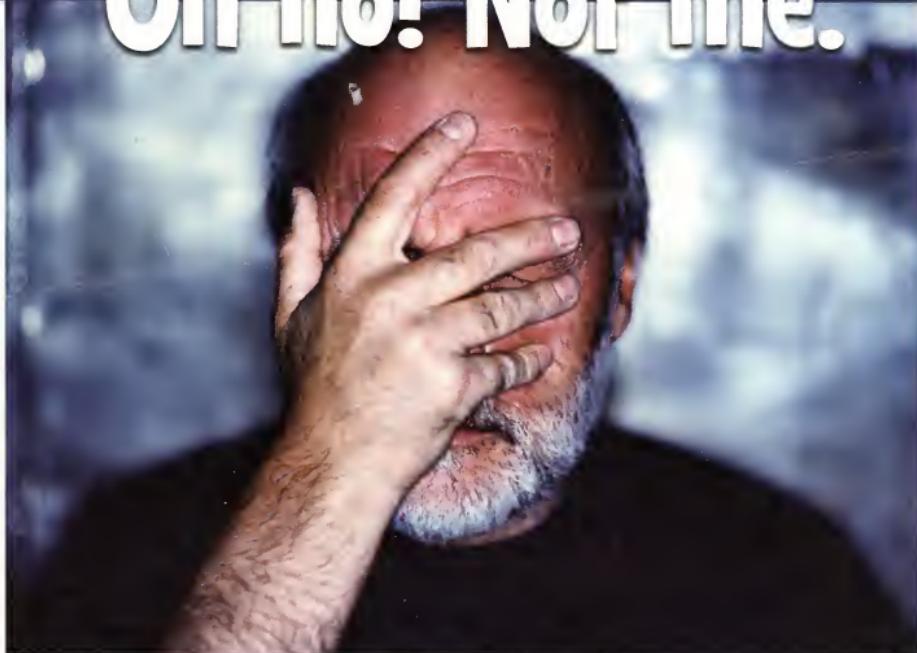


Pictured are Nathanael, Hannah, and Caleb—children of missionary Rob and Rebecca Wendland who serve in Malawi, Africa. The children appeared in *Taste of Home* magazine after Rebecca sent in a picture of them making one of the magazine's featured recipes. "Our kids were absolutely thrilled to see themselves in print," she says. "I was quite happy they kept the 'Lutheran Church of Central Africa' with our name. I was even more surprised when the apron prize actually arrived in the mail here in Malawi! The envelope was very torn up and taped by the post office, but the contents were still enclosed. I am so thankful for the technology that allows us to stay in touch with the rest of the world despite the thousands of miles that separate our continents."

Submitted by Rebecca Wendland

Send pictures to *Picture This*, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. On a separate sheet, give us information about the photo. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.

oh no! Not me.



Embarrassed by our own failings, we understand what it means to show compassion and forgiveness to others. Carl R. Henkel

We were at a gathering of about 30 people, and I was at the podium. I was about a minute into my opening devotion when a cell phone began to ring.

Cell phone embarrassment

After a couple rings, a man recognized it as his phone and immediately began to retrieve it. It continued to sound its piercing tone as he tried to turn it off. I paused briefly; we all waited; I tried to continue. There was a lot of snickering and more than a few witty comments.

Finally the phone stopped ringing, and its owner assured everyone that he had turned it off. More than a little embarrassed, he apologized for the

interruption but seemed satisfied that it wouldn't happen again. Ah, but soon it was ringing again ever so loudly! And again! Then followed the ring that alerts its proud owner that he has a message waiting.

By this time, the person next to him was giving him that "look." You see, the person whose phone was now out of control had, in the past, chided his friend for allowing this kind of thing to happen. The annoyance of the ringing cell phone happened often to his friend, but now it was happening to him. This one who admittedly had been critical of the cell-phone etiquette of others was now the offender!

After the devotion was over and we had concluded with prayer, the man apologized again and again for the disruption. Of course, we were all among friends, and no one was in the least bit upset. Yet he continued to say he was sorry, even e-mailing me later to express his contrition one more time. I suspect that what troubled him the most was the fact that what he previously found unacceptable in others had now happened to him.

We've all been there and done that

I'd like to believe that what happened in that conference room is one of those "teachable moments."

With human nature being what it is,